

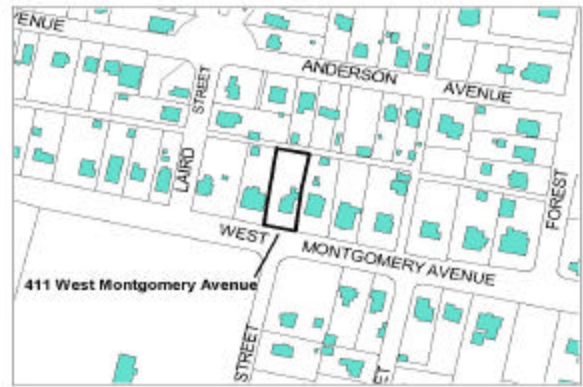
**CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

**February 6, 2001
MEETING NO. 02-01**

APPLICATION: HDC01-0180

DATE FILED: January 26, 2001

**APPLICANT/
OWNER:** Andrew D. Sellman
411 West Montgomery
Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850



PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: The subject property is a single-family residence on the north side of West Montgomery Avenue and is a contributing resource to the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District. The house is situated mid-block and faces south toward the intersection of West Montgomery Avenue and Thomas Street. It was built in 1924 and is in the R-90 (medium density residential) zone.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS AT THIS ADDRESS:

HDC00-0165	Installation of soffit vents and attic ventilation fan, approved 5/16/00
HDC99-0142	Tree removal, approved 3/16/99
HD-28-91	Tree removal, approved 11/20/91
HD-142-86	Dead tree removal, staff approval

REQUEST:

The applicant requests a Certificate of Approval to remove a Norway Spruce from the front yard. The tree is approximately 50 feet tall with a trunk diameter of approximately 24 inches and a branch spread of approximately 16 feet. The main trunk of the tree is located 4.5 feet from the edge of the front porch and branches overhang the front porch decking by about 3 feet.

The owner requests permission to remove the tree because he intends to eventually rebuild the front porch to match the design of the original porch which was removed in the 1930s. The original porch was larger than the existing porch and was covered with a hip roof. Rebuilding the porch would require removal of a large number of tree branches.

In addition, the soil and root mass of the tree is mounded above the soil level under the porch and causes water to flow under the porch into the cellar during heavy rain, according to the owner.

The tree is also a security problem in that it obscures much of the front porch and provides a hiding place for anyone trying to gain illegal access to the house. The owner also believes that the tree was improperly planted on the property because its large size and location so close to the house hide much of the front façade. He is also concerned that the tree blocks southern sunlight exposure in the winter. He states that there are numerous trees on the property that are more appropriate in terms of variety and location and claims that he has planted nine new trees on the property since occupying the house two years ago.

411 West Montgomery Avenue



**Spruce
Tree**



STAFF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The City Forester is in agreement with the applicant that the tree could cause damage to the roof and porch. The applicant has planted numerous other trees on the property and he intends to restore the front porch to its original design in the future in which case the tree would have to be severely trimmed or removed. However, the tree is healthy and does add to the character of the neighborhood.

- 1. Historic, archeological, or architectural value and significance of the site or structure and its relationship to the historic, archeological, or architectural significance of the surrounding area.*

The house at 411 West Montgomery Avenue is an example of early 20th century infill on lots in the late 19th century "West End Park" subdivision. It was built in 1924 for Lucy Conklin who was a member of the Charles England family that owned the adjacent Victorian house at 409 West Montgomery.

- 2. The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the remainder of the entire structure and to the surrounding area.*

The house is a 2 ½ story frame structure on a cement foundation. It has a hipped roof with asphalt shingles, wide eaves and a front, hipped dormer. The house is covered in a textured stucco. Its square form is similar to that of other houses built in the 1920s. The house has a plain, unadorned façade, in contrast to its Victorian neighbor. The front (south) façade features paired windows on each corner of both stories and in the dormer. There is a central front door with a large window and flanking sidelights. An uncovered porch with a cement foundation and capped cement piers connected to an iron balustrade stretches across the front façade. The front façade is largely obscured from the street by large trees and dense shrubbery. The house is situated on a long, narrow lot, approximately one-third acre in area.

- 3. The general compatibility of exterior design, scale, proportion, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.*

The request is for a tree removal; no new materials are proposed.

- 4. To any other factors, including aesthetic factors, which the Commission deems to be pertinent.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends approval for removal of the Norway Spruce as it is located very close to the house and could potentially cause damage. Severe pruning of the tree may be feasible as an alternative but this would not alleviate the problem of water flowing under the porch and into the cellar.